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**NATIONAL SECURITY DECISION
DIRECTIVE****U.S. Policy Toward Iran**

Dynamic political evolution is taking place inside Iran. Instability caused by the pressures of the Iraq-Iran war, economic deterioration and regime infighting create the potential for major changes in Iran. The Soviet Union is better positioned than the U.S. to exploit and benefit from any power struggle that results in changes in the Iranian regime, as well as increasing socio-political pressures. In this environment, the emergence of a regime more compatible with American and Western interests is unlikely. Soviet success in taking advantage of the emerging power struggle to insinuate itself in Iran would change the strategic balance in the area.

While we pursue a number of broad, long-term goals, our primary short-term challenge must be to block Moscow's efforts to increase Soviet influence (now and after the death of Khomeini). This will require an active and sustained program to build both our leverage and our understanding of the internal situation so as to enable us to exert a greater and more constructive influence over Iranian politics. We must improve our ability to protect our interests during the struggle for succession.

U.S. Interests and Goals

The most immediate U.S. interests include:

- (1) Preventing the disintegration of Iran and preserving it as an independent strategic buffer which separates the Soviet Union from the Persian Gulf;
- (2) Limiting the scope and opportunity for Soviet actions in Iran, while positioning ourselves to cope with the changing Iranian internal situation;
- (3) Maintaining access to Persian Gulf oil and ensuring unimpeded transit of the Strait of Hormuz; and
- (4) An end to the Iranian government's sponsorship of terrorism, and its attempts to destabilize the governments of other regional states.

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We also seek other broad and important, if less immediately urgent, goals.

- (1) Iran's resumption of a moderate and constructive role as a member respectively of the non-communist political community, of its region, and of the world petroleum economy;
- (2) continued Iranian resistance to the expansion of Soviet power in general, and to the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan in particular;
- (3) an early end to the Iran-Iraq war which is not mediated by the Soviet Union and which does not fundamentally alter the balance of power in the region;
- (4) elimination of Iran's flagrant abuses of human rights;
- (5) movement toward eventual normalization of U.S.-Iranian diplomatic consular and cultural relations, and bilateral trade/commercial activities;
- (6) resolution of American legal and financial claims through the Hague Tribunal; and
- (7) Iranian moderation on OPEC pricing policy.

Many of our interests will be difficult to achieve. But given the rapidity with which events are moving, and the magnitude of the stakes, it is clear that urgent new efforts are required. In moving forward, we must be especially careful to balance our evolving relationship with Iraq in a manner that does not damage the longer term prospects for Iran.

Present Iranian Political Environment

The Iranian leadership faces its most difficult challenges since 1981. The regime's popularity has declined significantly in the past six months, primarily because of intensified disillusionment with a seemingly unending war, the continued imposition of Islamic social policies on a population increasingly reluctant to accept such harsh measures, and a faltering economy brought on primarily by declining oil revenues. The impact of these problems is intensified by the realization that Ayatollah Khomeini's mental and physical health is fragile, which in turn casts a pall of uncertainty over the daily decision-making process.

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